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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7783
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2051
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5715
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2092
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2007

In Today's Papers

Hrant Dink Murderer Given a Hero's Treatment by Police, Jandarma

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Aksam, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Ogun Samast, the murderer of Turkish-Armenian writer Hrant Dink, was treated "like a hero" when he was caught in the Black Sea city of Samsun. A photograph of Samast posing in front, of a Turkish flag and the words of Ataturk taken after he was arrested, has become an issue of debate. The camera footage of the photograph, aired by TGRT television yesterday, revealed that it was taken at the gendarme post in the Samsun bus station; although a senior gendarme officer told Hurriyet that the photos and video footage were not shot by gendarme. The officer said the photo was deliberately leaked to the press in an attempt to raise suspicions about the role of the gendarme in the murder.

Cumhuriyet points out the photo showing Samast as a hero was first published by Star daily known to be close to the ruling AKP government. The paper also says the video footage of the photo shoot was aired by TGRT television, recently bought by Murdoch's Fox-TV.

Sabah reports Interior Ministry inspectors probing the murder of Turkish Armenian writer Hrant Dink have found that the police in Trabzon received 17 tip-offs over the past year that Yasin Hayal, another suspect in the case, was planning to kill Dink. Turkish newspapers say police were warned a year ago about a plot to kill Dink but failed to act to prevent the murder.

Meanwhile, papers and television news broadcasts report Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk has cancelled book tours in Germany and Belgium over security concerns and 18 other writers have been assigned bodyguards.

NGOs to Meet to Discuss Article 301

Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report

19 Turkish NGOs will hold a meeting to discuss changes to Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. Groupings such as Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB), labor unions TISK and DISK, and professional organizations such as Turkish doctors' union TTB will join the meeting to be held at Turkish Bars Association TBB in Ankara today. Papers report Foreign Minister Gul said his government's decision about Article 301 would not be shaped under public pressure. Article 301 is related to expressions "insulting Turkishness," and is the statute under which writers such as Hrant Dink and Orhan Pamuk have been prosecuted.

Cyprus-Turkey Oil Exploration Crisis

All papers report the Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General Yasar Buyukanit said concerning press reports that Turkey had dispatched warships to the eastern Mediterranean as a "show of force" against Greek Cypriot plans for oil exploration with Egypt and Lebanon that the ships were "already in the region" and that "no additional ships were sent." Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said before departing for Albania yesterday the ships were in the region for "routine and planned" activities. Sabah and Vatan report State spokesman Sean McCormack urged the parties to remain calm, to "refrain from any actions that might be misinterpreted by the other side" and called for "transparency," so that there are "no misunderstandings that might result in mishaps." Papers also report McCormack pointed to the UN for a solution.

Gul, Buyukanit Due to Visit the US

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul and Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General Yasar Buyukanit will discuss the PKK and cross-border issues in northern Iraq in upcoming separate visits to the US this month. Sabah says the Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) and the TGS are considering possibilities for operations against the

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PKK together with the US as well as with Iraq. Some papers report State spokesman McCormack as saying that Turkey and the US would discuss developments in Iraq, Iran, and the EU, as well the "cross-border problem." Buyukanit, to visit the US on February 11, will meet the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. Gul, due in the US on February 5, is expected to focus on the Armenian genocide bill submitted to the US Congress.

Turkish MPs Due to US to Campaign against Armenian Genocide Bill

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report 16 members of the Turkish Parliament will travel to the US in three separate groups from February 10-March 31 to campaign against the Armenian genocide bill through meetings with US congressmen. The first delegation will visit the US from February 10 -17, the second from February 24-March 3, and the third group between March 11 -18. Also, the Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) will reportedly help 32 lawmakers travel to the US to meet the representatives of leading American companies against the genocide bill.

Editorial Commentary on Armenian Genocide Bill in the US, US/Iraq-Iran

Sami Kohen comments in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "Introduction of the Armenian Genocide Resolution in the House the other day indicated a new crisis in the Turkish-US relationship, which was already in a sensitive situation. This time the chances seem rather weak for the resolution to be withdrawn or to be abolished during debates in the commission. If the resolution is adopted by the Congress, then, the main negative affect of it will be seen on Turkey-US relationship. Responding to a question on the issue the other day, Foreign Minister Gul said 'our strategic partnership will come to an end if the resolution is adopted.' Actually, despite the document signed last year, it is very obvious that the strategic partnership between Turkey and the US has been immensely weakened, lately. Nevertheless, Turkey's partnership is very important for US regional politics. And for Ankara, US general support and its coordination in the fight against the PKK in Iraq, is very important. If the necessary steps are not taken immediately on the resolution issue, the Turkey-US relationship will definitely be damaged. This issue is too urgent and important to be left in the

hands of the Bush Administration. It should be explained to the Congress, influential circles in the US and to the public. The Turkish government, Parliament, political parties, NGOs, businessmen, academicians, journalists, everyone should directly get in-touch with their counterparts in the US immediately and start a campaign to convince them."

Fehmi Kuru observed in the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak: "The Bush Administration is losing its support not only in Iraq but in the US as well. One of the latest surveys in the US showed that Bush is the most disrespected President so far. Moreover, Bush and his team do not hesitate to announce openly their dream of attacking Iran. As if it wasn't bad enough to attack Iraq to topple Saddam, now, with one last effort, the Neo-crazies are exerting efforts to convince Bush to attack Iran. The responsible team in Washington is thinking like this: The US has 150,000 troops in Iraq. Under these conditions it is not possible to launch an operation against Iran. If the US is considering an operation against Iran seriously, then, it definitely should decrease its responsibilities in Iraq. We should evaluate the news from Iraq in light of these developments."

TV Highlights
NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- An explosion ripped through a storage tank at Turkey's largest oil

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refinery Tupras in Izmit near Istanbul, killing two South African workers and injuring seven others. The explosion occurred when workers were dismantling a tetraethyl tank.

- Milliyet's chief editor Abdi Ipekci, killed 28 years ago by hitman Mehmet Ali Agca, was commemorated in Istanbul yesterday. Agca, still imprisoned in Turkey, had attempted to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981.

- Cardinal Camillo Ruini, head of the Catholic bishops in Italy, will participate in Turkey in the ceremonies planned to commemorate Catholic priest Andrea Santoro killed in Trabzon last year on February 5.

- Turkey's foreign capital association YASED will host in Istanbul a meeting of CEOs from around the world.

- Turkish Parliament's justice commission has approved a bill on witness protection program.

International News

- The UK-based International Institute for Strategic Studies reports Turkish sources as saying the PKK was planning to strike targets in Turkey using remote-control model planes.

- The Financial Times says Turkey weighs cross-border attacks in northern Iraq against the PKK together with the US.

- Mark Mazower of The Financial Times calls on Turkey to start open debates on the Armenian issue.

- Two suicide bomb attacks on a crowded outdoor market in the Iraqi Shiite city of Hillah killed 45 people and wounded 150 others.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON